7: Thompson--373 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
177, 534

"The few instruments that exist, notably the khène, are of Malayan or Chinese origin."

7: Thompson--376 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
116, 177, 167, 186, 464

"It is obvious that the future development of the country, as in Cambodia, cannot depend on any but imported labour. As ever, it is the prolific and industrious Chinese and Annamites who are flowing into Laos to the economic betterment of the land, but equally to the moral distress of its people. Middle Laos, from Savannakhet to Vientiane, is the region most subject to infiltration. Upper and Lower Laos will probably be cut apart by a wedge of foreign colonizers. The French cannot but favour this immigration. Laos is a terrestrial paradise offering an easy living, undisputed by the timid Laotians, to the miserable Annamites from the over-crowded Tonkinese delta. The Laotians, like the Khmers, prefer to withdraw rather than to struggle with their old enemies. A terse Laotian proverb crystallizes this ancient antagonism: 'Dog and cat, Annamite and Laotian.' In addition to taking their land and their women the Annamite has introduced vices like gaming and theft, and diseases like tuberculosis and syphilis. The contempt of the industrious and formalistic Annamite for the lazy and carefree Laotian is only matched by the latter's impotent hatred. Yet the evil is without remedy. Rich, unoccupied land will inevitably attract an industrious and prolific people like the Annamites, who are able and willing to do what Laotians cannot and will not do."

7: Thompson--380 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
116, 177, 797

"The missionaries, even if they made little headway in conversions, enjoy great moral influence in Laos, especially among the mountain peoples, to whom they teach new methods of agriculture, in addition to their medical, educational, and Scriptural activities. These primitive peoples do not differentiate between spiritual and temporal authorities, and often use the missionary as intermediary with the administration. These regions are so remote, and their economic and political importance so obviously relegated to the future, that the Mission has not encountered there the anti-clerical opposition that existed for so long in Annamite countries."

10: d'Orleans--277 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 124, 177, 192, 563, 802 Ethnic subgroups

"I am trying to make a lexicon of their [LSS: Kha boatmen, in the service of a Laotian] language; they answer us, but sometimes we have a great deal of trouble in hearing what they say, and particularly in separating the affixes or suffixes, with which they can surround the same word. I notice the absence of special names for certain classes of things; they have no word for bread and the names of the numerals, except the four first, are borrowed from the Laotians; lastly mother is called ma, the word in general use amongst nearly all the peoples of the world, perhaps because it is the first sound that a newborn infant instinctively produces, when it requires food."

10: d'Orleans--354 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 177, 565, 644

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]
"After a few more prayers in the pagoda, he [LSS: the king] returns home, preceded by his courtiers who are dressed in the Laos fashion, like the rest of the people, without any distinguishing sign, and who carry cups, boxes, a teapot, and other articles all of wrought gold, and most of them given by the King of Siam. It is surprising to notice side by side with these a small yellow tin box containing clothes, a French deal box, painted to represent carriages and horses, a phial containing scent, and a crystal bottle such as one may see in a hairdresser's shop. All this is indicative of what must happen in a country which is overrun, as this one will be, by the bad taste of what I may call a cheap and nasty civilisation. [sic] "

23: Franck--337-338 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 177, 291, 304, 644 Ethnic subgroup

"The prince had only to order the village chief, or the inhabitants themselves, to furnish new carriers, however, and they were soon there, though from then on we changed as often as we came to a village, sometimes two or three times a day. The coolies still seemed to be Kha, but they were men who had come into more contact with the outside world than those who had been with me all that strenuous Sunday, and they had lost some of the ornaments, simplicity, and politeness. Perhaps they were [338] not Kha at all, for they had all sorts of tattooing, and some of them had raised welts, like the bush negroes of Dutch Guiana. Each man according to his fancy wore a kind of kilt that was really a mere strip of cloth wound about him from waist to knees. Now and then we passed a woman on a journey, in a costume in which she would not have been unnoticed on Broadway, wearing earrings, neck-rings, two bracelets on each arm, and a barrel-shaped strip of cloth from nipples to knees, and carrying her bed and belongings, consisting of a sack hanging down from her forehead and on her back a rolled-up grass or reed mat on which to spend her virtuous nights."

25: Brodrick--94 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 177

"The cultural influence of Annam (and of China) upon the Laotians has been negligible, whereas that of Siam, and, indeed, of Burma have been far-reaching. It is, in fact, difficult to unravel, in this timeless land, what is Laotian and what is foreign, what is of ancient adoption and what is comparatively late importation. Still, despite the evidence you see all round you of non-Laotian styles in architecture, of custom and of ceremony, you never feel in the Land of the Laos that you are in Siam or Cambodia; there is something distinctively peculiar in the country, and it may well be that the nonchalant Laotians, in letting foreign influence run over them, have kept themselves essentially intact. In any case, as far as the externals of civilization are concerned, it is India and not China which is present in this last outpost of Indian culture on the mainland of Asia."

25: Brodrick--109 [2] S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 177, 346, 532

"The Phra-Keo Pagoda or Temple of the Emerald Buddha, [HD: in Vientane] is, by tradition, supposed to have been founded in A.D. 814, but it was razed by the Siamese and the Emerald Buddha was carried off to Bangkok where it may still be admired in its gorgeous temple. Needless to say, the Emerald Buddha is not carved out of emerald. It is fashioned in green jasper and is undoubtedly of Laotian workmanship, for the image, as you can behold it in the Siamese capital, has a most Laotian face, vehement, cunning and, it may be, lecherous.

The sight of Vientiane to-day is the That-Luong. This large stupa is some mile and a half outside the city and is set in a palm grove. The buildings seem to date from about 1567 and were put up to shelter a relic of the Buddha. The sanctuary was spared by the Siamese. However, in 1874, the Chinese Yünnan land-pirates, who feared neither God nor man, plundered and ravaged the shrine. It was botched up unskilfully, but a few years ago, was restored to its pristine appearance through the efforts of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient. The stupa not only shows the curious bulbous spire we noted at Luang-Prabang, but the whole place is uncommonly complicated in plan. It is surrounded by a cloister in the Siamese mode and the stupa itself rises from a series of rectangular terraces set round with numerous pinnacles joined together by an arcade."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

000 eventually to the Buddhas to solicit their curative powers; and if so what we should learn from it about the prevalence of disease among Europeans.

217 532 771 The museum of Vientiane, which I visited in the hope of learning something of the living art of the country, has also little more to show than a collection of Buddhas. There is a tranquillity, a lack of compulsion in the Hinayanist Buddhism of Cambodia and Laos — so different from the neurotic deformation practised by the later Khmer kings — which is not propitious to the development of religious art. There was no violence or drama in the life of Buddha comparable to that of Christ, and the Indian Epics have been eschewed in Laos as improperly secular. It has been enough to carve Buddhas, and more Buddhas *ad infinitum*, seeking perhaps to multiply in this way the magic virtues which each image contains. The curator takes you round, explaining the characteristic postures — there are seven or eight — all of which can be appreciated in five minutes. After that there are minute differences of physique and physiognomy to be noted that reflect the influences of India, of Java, of Thibet or of Ceylon. That is all.

177 532 782 By the time the museums turn to the art of the people, the grotesque animals in bamboo, the carved movable figures which are obscene to European eyes — all of which become a pagan burnt-offering at the end of each *boun*[1] — it will be too late. The microphone is an infallible sign of what is to come. Nothing of this kind will survive the era of materialism, under whatever form it arrives.

253 825 *These are the sights of Vientiane*, but in addition there is a spectacle which is popular with Europeans, who, remote, isolated, and living under difficulties, tend to shut themselves up within the protective social rituals of people in exile.

This spectacle is the slaughterhouse at work. I do not know whether or not it is illegal in Laotian law to kill animals, but certainly it is thought shameful, and the killing for Europeans is done at the dead of night on the outskirts of the town. The

[1] [Laotian religious festival -- Analyst] 254

a certain basic licentiousness and is accented by a final sharp cheer; and the singsong in the strict sense which has no great development and to which were applied words, at the whim of the man or woman singing, to celebrate a welcome or any kind of event (1). 533

1. M. Galerne, op. cit. /Courrier musical, 1925/

Here is one of the love songs, "from which springs all the sentimentally exquisite poetry of the Laotian soul":

The moon is rising; come, o my beloved, and speak to us under the rays of the twinkling star;

O flowers, which exhale your pure perfumes at this hour, come and tell me of his good qualities;

O my heart, why do you beat so strong?

I think of my beloved.

Come, come quickly; I am alone under the roof of my house; why do you leave me thus?

I am languishing, my beloved. Come, then, and press this heart which beats so strongly for you and ask it for the essence of my thoughts.

Come, come quickly.

/123/ Page 123 is devoted to an illustration: "A khene player." -- Translator/ /124/

We must regretfully cut short this rapid excursion into the melodious garden of these people who are instinctively artistic and who lost the joy of living together with their independence through the fault of their leaders' tearing one another to pieces, and also because there cannot for long be any place here below for individuals, as well as for peoples, whom the Germans themselves, although they are nevertheless deeply musical, have scornfully called "mandolin players" (1).

1. The Laotian theater scarcely deserves mention. It derives exclusively from the Cambodian and Siamese theater /177/ and is likewise made up of extremely long plays -- epics, warrior legends and romances, and religious tales taken from the Vedas, the Ramayana or the Mahabharata. "To this repertoire are joined the purely Kmer plays and various adaptations of Burmese origin, which are played in classical costumes and in which a good bit of comedy and modernism 545

545 and a barb of satire are mingled with the ancient traditions."
/177/ (L. de Reinach, op. cit. /Le Laos, posthumous edition, Paris, 1911/, p. 191.)

341 The other arts: architecture. Carefree artists: this is what the
346 Laotians seem to have been throughout the ages. And this is what
172 explains the extreme fragility of the innumerable monuments with which they adorned their land and which the pitiless tropical vegetation is today strangling for the most part. Under the Kmer influence
/177/ in the south and the Burmese in /125/ the north they built temples, chapels, pagoda-libraries, and reliquaries in the shape of "lotus blossoms" or pyramids or cones which were without any originality of their own but almost always charming in the grace, prettiness and elegance of their details. The reigning princes, from Fa-Ngoun to Souligna, were all great builders of temples, but if we except three or four edifices in Luang-Prabang, a few pagodas and chapels, the That-Luong in Vientiane and the Vat Sisaket which is only a century old, practically nothing is left of this abundant flowering (1).

1. There can be no question here of the important monastery of Vat-Phou (Bassac), which is really Kmer and belongs in some way to the Angkor group.

Everywhere in Laos one encounters impressive ruins of brick pagodas which were clumsily built but in which the plaster which covered them still frames the openings with many-colored ornaments and exquisite arabesques. For several years the French have tried, albeit somewhat tardily, to save the chief of these mutilated vestiges of an Edenic past from total destruction. Even the Vat Prakeo itself is today, alas! irrevocably destined to final disintegration.

"More fragile still (was) the style of building /126/ in wood which may well have yielded the most beautiful of the country's achievements. One of the most interesting of these exists today only in the memory which was recorded by a drawing of Delaporte at the time of the expedition of Doudart de Lagree... This was a pagoda located in the vicinity of Luang-Prabang... its form was highly individual, and reminds one of a feeding trough or a bread-pan. Delaporte compares it to an Oriental tomb. Rectangular in shape, its walls flared out up to the first roof. The latter was surmounted by a second recessed story which flared out again to support a second richly ornamented roof..."

"The wooden panels which formed the walls, the corbels, and 341
the beams were all carved with great delicacy. This pagoda was 346
as pretty in the fineness of its details as it was elegant in its gen- 172
eral lines.
"But nothing is left of it" (1).

1. Cf. G. Maspero, L'Indochine /Un empire colonial francais: l'Indochine. Paris, 1929-1930/, p. 186.

Sculpture. For these sanctuaries, the Laotians made hordes of 532
statues out of stone, brick, and especially bronze, which were 175
wholly or partly covered with gold. Of the latter, which were al-
ways molded from wax models, some attained gigantic size. /127/
All of them strike the various attitudes of the Buddhist liturgy. The
bodies are sketchily draped and may be seated, standing, walking
or lying down, their arms outspread. The faces are surmounted by
a sort of tiara and are frozen in a hieratic smile which is not very
expressive and seldom varies.

Painting. As for the fresco paintings which brighten the walls
of certain pagodas, they are not of any special interest. Most of /177/
them were "primarily the work of Burmese, Cambodians or Chinese
of whom the native artists (were only) the pupils" (1).

1. Cf. L. de Reinach, op. cit. /Le Laos, posthumous edition, Paris, 1911/, p. 342.

The art of the gold and silver smith. On the other hand, the 326
Laotian jewelers and silversmiths knew and still know, with only
the most meager of tools, how to work gold and silver admirably--
primarily silver--and how to chase and engrave it. Their motifs
show an attractive decorative invention, and it is chiefly in this
"minor art" which borders on small-scale industry that we find the
most original manifestations of old-time Laotian life /128/ --
betel services, vases, cups, sword and dagger hilts; bracelets,
necklaces, rings, headpins, earrings, etc.

Basketwork and weaving. Finally, "like all the peoples of the 285
Far East, the Laotians are skilled in all kinds of basketwork. A 531
very pretty object which seems to be peculiar to this land is the
small basket for women in which the basketwork is covered with

175* /139/ Lan-Na (Xieng-Mai and its dependencies of Xieng-Khong
101 and Muong-Nan), an age-old battlefield and crossroads of all the Burmese, Laotian and Siamese expeditions, lived in permanent dread of new conflicts, and its princes owed their continued existence only to the multitude of competitors who vied with one another for an alliance with them.

The former Dai-co-Viet had given way to the kingdom of Annam, which was in full expansion to the south.

The lords of Hue had accomplished their conquest of the Chams. They had settled at Phan-Ri (1692), had gained a foothold in Cochinchina and had driven the Cambodians from Saigon (1698). Finally, their influence had crossed the mountains in the east ever since their troops had entered victorious with Ong-Hue into Vientiane, which was henceforth to owe them the tribute of vassaldom.

As for the Siamese of Ayuthya, who were favored by the accessibility of their territory to the sea and hardened by the desperate battles which they had waged for their existence, they were solidly established in the whole lower basin of the Menam. After striking a mortal blow at the power of Angkor and shaking off the Burmese yoke, they experienced an era of remarkable prosperity all through the seventeenth century. Encouraged by their kings, they
/177/ formed /140/ trade relations abroad, particularly with Europe, and
● were the first in the peninsula to undergo Western influence.

Their capital became covered with palaces, princely residences, vast gardens and sumptuous temples in the number of more than three hundred. The many travel accounts which have come down to us all mention the considerable growth of Ayuthya, which spread at this time over an island "seven leagues around." Wide, straight paved streets crossed numerous quarters which were peopled with Europeans, Malays, Chinese, Japanese, Hindus and even Pegouans. Vaulted bridges made of brick crossed the natural canals criss-crossing the city, which has justly been called the Venice of the Far East. The Dutch had a large trading office there which was supplied by their largest vessels. Across from them, on the opposite bank, the "camp" of Portuguese half-breeds formed a compact agglomeration. The strictly Siamese quarter was immense. Animated by a host of artisans and shopkeepers, it stretched around large squares which served as markets (1).

1. Cf. Nicolas Gervaise (1680) and Commandant E. Lunet de la Jonquiere, Le Siam et les Siamois.

They struck out into the inextricable forests of Burmese Laos, 648*
which were "cut here and there by muddy ricefields and by over- 175*
flowing torrents," entered Yunnan which had been desolated by 654
the insurrection of the Tau-Pings, the latter further complicated by new Moslem revolts, and were marching resolutely westwards into the heart of the insurgent land when Doudart became exhausted and was forced to halt. He was taken with difficulty to Tong-Tchouen and to the French missionaries of Dong-Chau-Phu, but only to die there of a hepatic attack on March 12, 1868. Francis Garnier then took charge of the expedition, embarked at Hang-Keou bringing back his leader's remains, and returned to Saigon on the following June 28 after an absence of two years.

"A terrible voyage," concludes P. Legendre, "one of the most daring of the century and which was also to cost the young de Carne his life, but /234/ which established in a peremptory way the necessity for France to wield a preponderant influence in Tonkin, the key to China."

Resumption of relations between Luang-Prabang and Tran-Ninh. 648*
In the meantime Tiantha-Koumane had had occasion to resume 175*
continuous relations with the old kingdom of Xieng-Khouang.

Ever since its annexation to the empire of Annam (1) this land

1. See above, p. 178.

had been living in strict servitude. The exactions of the Quan-Phu's soldiers weighed heavily on the natives, who were incessantly ransomed and pillaged with the utmost severity. The authority of the emperor's delegate met with resistance which was all the more /177/ keen in that this mandarin had undertaken a policy of brutal assimilation the aim of which was to force the Laotian people to adopt all the customs -- and even the clothing -- of the Annamites. The agents which Siam secretly maintained in the region had not failed to exploit the inhabitants' exasperation and to impel one of Chao-Noi's cousins (2) whom Annam had mistakenly allowed to

2. Chao-Xan.

live freely in Tran-Ninh to open revolt. One /235/ fine night the Quan-Phu was assassinated in his fortress together with his whole guard, and the small Siamese force, which had taken part in the

133 The market of Bassac owes its importance to the proximity of the
433 plateau. It is therefore a storehouse for the Laotians of the whole
438 region, a reservoir [51] from which they draw. The part which it plays is obviously a fine one, and no more can be asked of it.

There has also been much discussion as to whether large-scale breeding of buffalo and oxen would be successful there, for at present livestock is found only in the villages situated near the Sédone, that is to say, quite far from the plateau. The question has not yet been settled, and sufficient tests have not yet been made.

133 At the southernmost corner of the plateau there is a conical mountain about 800 meters in altitude which Francis Garnier baptized The Breast [le Téton] because of its shape, and to which he later gave the name Lagrée's Peak [Pic de Lagrée] in commemoration of the President of the Exploratory Commission of 1866.

[224] The elephant hunters of southern Laos go to the mountainous region of Saravane and Attopeu every year, and there they capture an annual quota of fifty to a hundred elephants.

133 To the east of Attopeu the mountains are inhabited by wellnigh independent Kha tribes--Cédangs, Djaraïs, Rognaos and Bahnars. The two latter tribes have almost been pacified, thanks [177] to the persevering efforts of the Christian missionaries of Kon-Toum. [797] This point is the center of the mission, and through it passes the road from Attopeu to Qui-Nhon. It crosses the Annamitic Chain 563 between Kon-Xalam and Kon-Tiorak at an altitude of about 900 meters. Near Attopeu this same road goes up over Pou-Satièng (400 meters), the last ramification of the great chain, which separates the basin of the Sé-Souk from that of the Sé-Kémane.

[135] This region of Pou-Satièng, Sé-Souk and Sé-Kémane has long been known to be rich in gold deposits.

§ IV--HYDROLOGY

a.--THE MÉKONG--GENERALITIES

133 It has often been said, and rightly so, that the Nile constituted Egypt. In the same way it can be said that the Mékong makes Laos, for is it not the river which gives what vitality there is to these vast isolated regions? Is it not the river which, by its annual floods, helps the growth of rice? Does it not supply, with its fish, a large

is [Illustration here] a duty for us, to restore the Khas to the normal status to which their imposing number in the total population as well as the special qualities which they possess give them a right. 000

Once emancipated from their strict servitude and from the rapacity of the Laotian and Thai mandarins, and once commanded by leaders who have been chosen by them and from members of their own race, the Khas will rise rapidly and, as [136] time passes, will certainly give a most effective impetus to the development of our possession's riches.

Moreover, they have not lost the tradition of their original status. They are conscious of their own antiquity and say, not without scorn, that the peoples who are newcomers to Indo-China are only their younger brothers. Their race has fallen back on its own resources, has divided into small groups, has opposed a force of absolute inertia to the invader and the conqueror and has thus kept itself free for many long centuries from mixtures with other peoples. Today there are still many descendants of these first possessors of the land and one may find in them, in a latent state, the energy and courage so conspicuously absent in the conquering races which drove them back to the mountains and reduced them to a kind of slavery or ostracism from which the latter greatly profited. 563 173

Nor can it be denied that the Khas are capable of moral and material improvement. There are many, for example, who have adopted Buddhism (1), and still others Catholicism (2). These Khas 563 795 797

(1) Khouène Khas and Khmou Khas.

(2) Bahnar Khas, Rognaos, etc.

have yielded up to persuasion and gentle treatment what they refused for many centuries to constraint and force. The future is therefore encouraging.

What is more, the question of emancipating the Khas has left the domain of theory and pure speculation. In 1894 M. Macey, one of our political agents, emancipated the Khas in the territories of Xieng-Khong, Muong-Mugne, Poukha, etc. The terrain was well chosen for the experiment, since this daring attempt was applied precisely to the Khouène, Khmou and Lemet Kha groups whose moral regeneration had already begun through the practice of Buddhism. 563 177

177 563 144 Notice should also be taken of the transformation which has been going on for half a century or so, in the fusion of Khas with Lus, Laos and Thais. From these fusions have emerged the mixed-blood races which are known as Phou-Thèngs, Phou-Thiongs, Soués, Phongs, Phou-Oks, Laos-Nios, etc. [137] [Illustration] [138] [Blank page]

[139] Later on in 1898 and 1899 the 1894 experiment was tried once more, thanks to the intelligent initiative taken by the Superior Commandant in Upper Laos. His Majesty the king of Luang-Prabang proclaimed the emancipation of the Khas in his kingdom on both banks of the Mékong and even of those who, while natives of Luang-Prabang, are employed in Siam in the lumber camps of the upper Ménam valley.

In résumé, the Khas of French Laos are anything but a negligible quantity, but rather constitute a force and a reserve of energy from which we may draw great profit.

3. LANGUAGES

197 194 It is impossible here to examine in detail the many Kha idioms and dialects, which only a long and attentive special study could succeed in coordinating, in grouping by similarities and in identifying with other languages, idioms and dialects which contributed to their formation.

The Kha dialects have harsh consonant sounds, among which the R and K are particularly noticeable, in contrast to what is the case in the other forms of the Thai language spoken in Laos where R, except in Siamese, is replaced by L or H.

Insofar as it is possible to judge, the primitive languages must have been corrupted when the land was invaded by foreigners. From that time on they dissolved, changed and became subdivided into idioms, and then into varied dialects. Besides the regional and racial 211 idioms and the various local dialects the Khas, who do not (except for the Khouènes) have any form of writing, use various means to translate their thoughts, and symbolic objects such as strips of wood in which they make notches in accordance with a conventional system.

This method may be compared to that of a great many illiterate persons, who sometimes succeed in keeping quite complicated accounts by this means.

If one were to entrust a letter to a Kha courier, for example, one [140] would give him the following symbolic objects grouped together:

212
197

This is doubtless due to the use of the brush, which does not make it possible to draw characters as fine and as purely rounded as with a dry point, a wooden stylus, a pen or a pencil, which are the only instruments used to write the other varieties of the Thai language.

Phouthai, like Laotian, is written in characters, but these differ in number and in form. The vowels are intercalated between the consonants, or are placed like accents above the line when the consonant stands alone, or may even always be placed above in the case of some vowels. This way of understanding the use of vowels can also be found in certain primitive languages.

[101]

In the regions where Phouthai writing is used the influence of the proximity of Annam and China has clearly manifested itself, and the alphabet has become syllabic. Scholars are able to learn by heart a certain number of syllables in which consonants and vowels are joined to form a single character, but those who have not learned Laotian cannot distinguish between the vowels and consonants nor use them separately.

The Phouthais, who have the same basic spoken language as the Laotians but who have a different writing and religion, must either have separated from the primitive groupings before writing was created and have attained sufficient cohesion to create their own form of writing, or else must have learned it in a perfected state of development through some foreign current. It may also be said that when the Laotians adopted the Buddhist religion they lost their old Phouthai signs and took over those of the bonzes who had come to teach them the new faith. Then the brush was abandoned for the stylus and the point, which make it possible to write more rapidly and finely and to form a greater number of signs--these being necessary, moreover, to express and define the abstract ideas and subtle dogmas of the new religion.

177
195

[142] The Phouthai alphabet includes only twenty-three characters, almost all of which are syllabic.

212
194

The Siamese language. Of all the forms of the Thai language, Siamese, as we have seen, is the most complete and the most highly developed. Thus it will perhaps be of interest to give some notion, as rapidly as possible, of this language.

The alphabet is composed of forty-four letters which are divided into three classes, as follows:

11 letters on a rising tone, or high letters;
9 letters on a middle tone, or recto tono middle letters;

consonants. Vowels or diphthongs are also sometimes written before the consonant. 212 194

This system of accentuation is, however, not at all fixed, because of the lack of tonic accents. This is what explains the great number of synonyms, as far as spelling goes--synonyms which differ only in pronunciation. It is therefore essential to know the meaning of the sentence in order to give it the necessary accentuation and the proper intonation.

It is easy to write, but reading it is fraught with difficulty. To be sure, the orthography is not very complicated, and after a certain time one can manage to write it fairly correctly.

The same is not true of Siamese, and the fixed rules of tonality which it has make it possible, when one has a firm grasp of them, to read all texts without understanding anything.

The Youn language. The Youn language which is in current usage in all of western Laos, [145] that is to say in the basin of the upper Ménam and in part of the Laotian Shan States, is Lao which has been modified graphically by the introduction of certain forms borrowed from the alphabetic signs of the Burmese language. There is no doubt but that it is a compound of the Thai language and that which was brought to Laos by the Pégouans and the Burmese and which underwent profound modifications on contact with Buddhism. [177]

What seems to lend credence to this hypothesis is that the Youn alphabet is used almost exclusively in all parts of Laos for the sacred books and manuscripts of the pagodas. It is a kind of transition between Pali, which is too little known and little suited to expressing the sounds of the Thai language, and this latter language itself which is regarded as too vulgar. A somewhat modified Youn alphabet was then created, and was reserved for religious writings, both texts and copies. A knowledge of this special alphabet is, in Laos, the mark of a superior degree of education. 212 176

The Lu language. Like the preceding, the Lu language is complex and formed of the same elements. That is to say, it is due to the introduction of a Burmese graphic element into the already existing Thai element. In this way it has answered to new needs which resulted from the milieu and from social relations. 212 177

Thus the Lu language includes a certain number of Chinese, Kha and Burmese words which have been added to the original Thai mass.

The Lu alphabet includes twenty-six letters, twelve vowels and fourteen consonants.

49: Reinach--132 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

805
796

(Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

Besides these major holidays there are a certain number of others which are more religious than secular in character and which fall in between the ones dealt with above.

In the course of the sixth month (April-May), for example, a religious holiday is celebrated in memory of the first leaders of the Buddhist religion.

At the end of the eleventh month, on a date which is fixed in accordance with the rites and which varies from one year to another, a celebration takes place in the pagodas in honor of the men who first introduced Buddhism into Indo-China.

[785

Finally, after the twelfth month (November or December), comes the feast of penitence which applies to all the faithful. During a [174] kind of Lent which lasts for nine days, true believers must abstain from certain foods and from all sex relations.

177 •
527

Since our establishment in Laos the province capitals and all the centers where Europeans live have celebrated the National Holiday on July 14 which the natives call Boun-Phi-Falang-Sete (Holiday of the French Genie) or, by onomatopoeia, Boun Ka-Tor-Yu-Yet. [C. A. M. Translator's note. The latter term seems to be an approximation of the French Quatorze juillet ("July 14").]

MORES AND CUSTOMS

101

By reason of their diverse origins and the relations into which they have entered with neighboring peoples, as well as by the cross-breeding which has taken place, the races of Laos necessarily have characteristics, costumes, dwellings and, in a word, mores and customs which differ to a greater or less extent from one race to another (1).

(1) On this question of mores and customs we shall have recourse from time to time to a notice entitled Le Laos français which was written by the Superior Resident in Laos and based on reports and local monographs which were provided by our administrators and are in consequence authoritative.

[114]

If we have consistently reproduced here extracts from the above work, this is because they provide an admirable summation

149: Reinach--134 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

"Costume. The Laotian costume is the langouti or Siamese sampot. This is a long band of cloth without any seams, and between one and 1.2 meters wide by 2.5 to three meters long. The cloth is placed around the waist to make a skirt, with the opening in front. To keep the skirt in place a knot is made in front with part of the surplus cloth, and the loose ends of the cloth left hanging in front are rolled, passed between the legs and attached to the belt in the middle of the back. The skirt then takes the form of a pair of baggy trousers covering the front of the legs down to the knees and leaving the lower part of the thighs bare in back. The chest is left bare, and a sash is tied around the waist. This is the ordinary garment, and that worn by all the common people. The sash is often worn on the shoulder or around the chest, but it has to be removed and wound around the loins whenever one speaks to anyone who has a right to one's respect. Dandies wear shoes, stockings or socks, quite frequently a short-sleeved or sleeveless knitted vest, a jacket made of white cotton or flannel, depending on the season, and a hat of any type whatever, or even a cap. But these are imported European styles which have not become widespread. Umbrellas enjoy great favor." (Le Laos Français.)

This costume is a relatively recent import, for two hundred years or so ago the Laotians on the banks of the river, as those of the interior still do today, wore a fairly long jacket [178] made of cotton cloth woven in the land. The jacket was caught in at the waist by a sash and came down over a broad pair of trousers made of the same material. The whole garment was dark blue or almost black in color. On the head they wore a kind of turban made of silk or cotton of the same color.

The abandonment of this purely Thai costume was due to the influence of the Siamese and Cambodians during their incursions into Laos. It was also at this time that the Laotians formed the habit of cutting their hair, which they had previously worn rolled in a coil on the back of the head.

"Laotian women wear a skirt which covers them from the hips to the ankles and is made of silk interwoven with gold threads. These skirts are rather dark in color, and the pattern is made up of vertical stripes which are close together and difficult to see. In Luang-Prabang the lower part of the garment is decorated with a flat trimming formed of two or three closely spaced gold galloons. At the top of the skirt a sash made of red cloth and embroidered to a greater

291 cover their bust with a small short jacket which is very close-fitting and bright in color. It has a heart-shaped opening on the chest and, like the men's jacket, is ornamented with galloons and passementerie. For celebrations and ceremonies Lu women wear a heavy turban on their head which is folded flat or pleated, shaped like a mitre and generally made of black silk spangled with gold.

301 Both men and women pierce the lobes of their ears [246] with a broad opening, into which they introduce hollow gold or silver cylinders which are sometimes as large as three centimeters in diameter.

306 Great lovers of jewelry, the Lus number skilled jewelers and goldsmiths among them who make hair coil plaques, ear cylinders, flat braided metal belts with wide chased and checkered buckles, bracelets, rings, hilts and sheaths for daggers and swords, etc. [Illustration alongside text here]

411 The Lus almost always wear daggers and swords. Each of them, so
493 to speak, possesses a rifle, generally flintlock, which by the shape of the stock, the length of the barrel and the many bands which adorn it greatly resembles the long Moukhala so dear to our Arabs in Algeria.

[361] Lu villages are clean, and the houses are arranged in a checkerboard pattern.

[231] The Lus have a high reputation as breeders of oxen and horses.

527 A great lover of celebrations and parades, this boisterous people sets off gunpowder at every opportunity, and there is no festival, private or public, so small that it is not accompanied by salvos and fireworks.

• [77] From their contact with the Burmese the men have retained a
535 [247] [Illustration] [248] [Blank page] [249] taste for dancing and for sword fights mingled with dance steps in which they manifest a real grace and elegance.

"Among other forms of amusement, the men execute, with a truly remarkable suppleness and skill, sword dances which are perfectly elegant. Naked to the waist, with their trousers rolled up and bunched and a wooden sword in each hand whose cutting edge has been dipped in dye so that the thrusts will leave a mark, the two champions confront one another. Moulinets, parries and returns follow one another without apparent effort, and the movements are undulating and rapid but without any abruptness. The men seem to be caressing one another, not fighting, and yet the slashes leave their colored traces on the skin of the vanquished. Direct thrusts are forbidden, but the entire body from head to foot is fair game for the opponent. Thus during the

436 It will perhaps be of some interest to note here that the peoples of Laos have no respect for European gold coins, [420] because their gold 822 is alloyed with copper! In this country, as in all of the Far East in 439 general, it is thought that gold is the noble metal par excellance, that 177 it is polluted and diminished by alloying it with copper, which is unworthy of it, and that it can endure being made into an alloy only with silver.

The only "gold" coins in use, and still not at all currently in northern Laos, are books of gold leaf the thickness of tinfoil. They come from China and bear the official stamps of the country's banks which put them into circulation as "merchandise" in the same way as bars of silver.

Weighing instruments

405 The weighing instruments used in Laos include the "Ta-Dieng" or "Sing," a Chinese steelyard made of wood which has three rows of graduations. It may have a hook or a single platform, and is used for weights ranging from one "Sang" (1.23849 kilograms) up to several piculs.

For weights of less than a "Sang" the same kind of Chinese steelyard, with a hook or platform, is used, but it is smaller and made of ivory or bone.

A small pair of beam scales with platforms shaped like cupels, which is called "Sing-Dieng," is used mainly for weighing precious metals and gems.

There are several series of weights for balances. They are made of bronze, iron or copper and are most diverse in shape, representing elephants, imaginary birds, hexagons, pentagons, cones, pyramids, etc.

2. TRADE COMMODITIES AND PRODUCTS OF EXCHANGE

438 Since there is no industry to speak of in Laos, the local products 241 which make up the basic commodities of interior trade and exports come mainly from agriculture, livestock raising, scavenging, fishing and hunting. Mention may be made, however, of certain products of local, not to say familial, industry which enter into interior commerce and to some extent into the trade which goes on with neighboring countries.

438 [421] These include cloth goods of pure silk, either plain or 433 spangled with gold, goods of silk blended with cotton, and wholly cotton goods, then articles of jewelry and goldsmithing, and finally metals and ores from the still rudimentary mining industry and pottery goods, edge-tools, basketry, etc.

505 Large quantities of nep (rice suitable
438 for making alcohol), hides, horn, cardamom, wax, benzoin, various gums, etc. were shipped from Bassac, from Pakse, from Savannakhet, from Vien-Tiane and from other Laotian centers which had formerly traded exclusively with Bangkok by way of the Nongkay-Outaradit route on the Menam and by the Korat route on the Se-Moun.

505 "Passenger traffic, which was almost nil when the new services
484 were established, is increasing every day. The natives are beginning to become familiar with this rapid, convenient and inexpensive manner of traveling which the steamship represents and they are making more frequent use thereof, a fact which can only contribute to the broadening of relations between the various posts scattered along the great river and increase trade in their products of all kinds" (1).

(1) See, in Appendix XXX, the transport rates between France and Indo-China and between Saigon and Laos.

[487] [Illustration at top of page]

CHAPTER XI

1. SOCIAL STATUS. SLAVERY

[565] Upon our arrival in Laos, we found a hierarchial society com-
567 prised of nobles, commoners and slaves. We could not do better than to preserve all features of the political, social and administrative
178 organization just as it had been. In this respect we took our inspira-
177 tion from our predecessors the Siamese, leaving our new subjects the utmost liberty and respecting their traditions, customs and mores insofar as these were compatible with our own institutions.

Thus we were at times forced to recall certain native officials who had compromised themselves with the Siamese, or who through their exactions had made themselves unworthy of their office. Moreover, we have always acted tactfully and mildly, [488] leaving the choice of officials to election, in accordance with custom.

But above all, we took radical measures by completely suppressing the slave trade and by regularizing a very mild form of slavery for debt.

[556] There used to be slavery in Laos, as in Siam, in the form of slavery by capture, by purchase and for debt. It yielded high profits for those who engaged in the traffic, for the children and grandchildren of slaves were slaves themselves at birth, a fact which increased the fortunes of their masters to that extent.

149: Reinach--400 G-3 (no date) 1931 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

[102]

APPENDIX XVII
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLES OF LAOS

I

563
144
174

Which was the truly autochthonous race, whence did it come, and what were its mores and customs? No one can answer this question, and the only statement which can be advanced is that the savage peoples must have settled in the Indo-Chinese peninsula at a time when present-day Indo-China did not yet exist, geologically speaking, and when a greater or lesser part of the Asiatic continent was covered by water.

Coming from the Malay Archipelago, the Khas occupied the south of the peninsula at first and immediately entered into a struggle with the aborigines. Stronger and more intelligent, they drove the aborigines back into the forests and mountains and founded groups and colonies in their midst which gradually absorbed the first occupants, until that day when the victorious Khas came up against men of the yellow race who drove them back into the mountains in their turn, and into the poorest and most remote parts of the land.

Coming down from the high plateaus of central Asia, probably from Tibet, the men of yellow race came in through the northwest and at first occupied the northern provinces of the immense territory which was later to make up the Chinese empire. These natives, whom the Chinese chroniclers designate by the name of Y, that is to say "Bearers of large bows," and by the name of "Miao-Tse," or "Sons of the uncultivated fields," were driven back in their turn by new invaders. They then fell back into the southern provinces and sought refuge on little-accessible peaks where more or less pure types of their ancient race may still be found today, and from there they spread into the valleys of the Mekong, the Menam, the Salouen and the Irrawaddy. Isolated from one another as a consequence of their expansion, these individuals of primitive race became mixed with one another and with the first inhabitants of the conquered regions, and gave birth to intermediary sub-races and to distinct groups whose character and even number is very difficult to determine. Language became [103] differentiated, the kind of handwriting used was influenced by the proximity of more powerful peoples, dress changed, and yet all of them preserved analogous usages and beliefs which militate in favor of a common origin. Thence arises the necessity of seeking the origin of these peoples in the diversity of families, tribes, sub-races and races which sucessively shared the extreme provinces of present-day

[171]
[172]

China and Indo-China (1)

(1) E. PRANOH. LE LAOS français. 1701 CHALLAMEL. [PARI

China and Indo-China (1).

[113] (1) E. Picanon, Le Laos français. 1901, Challamel. [Paris.]

II

173 Laos, Thais and Khas. Although the Laotian legends
563 attribute the same origin to all of these (Mueng-Theng or Dien-Bien-
144 Phu) and say that they all came from the same "gourd" (Nam-Tao-Phoun), it is hardly likely that the Laotians and the Khas have a common origin. Indeed, the characteristics which serve to distinguish the two races are too numerous and too marked, both from the point of view of the racial types themselves and as regards language, mores and religious beliefs.

144 Nor can it be affirmed that the Khas are the representatives of
174 the aboriginal population, for before any of their people had mounted the throne of Luang-Prabang, six kings foreign to their race had already occupied it--if we may regard the list of the first kings of the land which is preserved in the Phong-Sa Va-Dan (annals of the kingdom) as correct--and of these conquering princes the first is said to have come from India, and the second from Cambodia.

In any case, the Khas are said to have preceded the Laotians in the land, and it was not until the reign of their fourth and last king that they are supposed to have been conquered and driven out or enslaved by the Laotians, who had come down from Dien-Bien-
[609] Phu. Since that time, and despite many revolts of which the last is almost recent, the Khas have never ceased being "a folk talliable and liable to forced labor at pleasure" for their vanquishers, and their name has become a synonym for a low person or slave in the current
[56] idiom. Not until 1895 were the Khas once and for all freed--freed is perhaps not the word, for in the strict sense they were never slaves--or at least summoned to enjoy a system of rule similar to that of the other natives and which left no margin for arbitrariness and vexations.

173 In designating Dien-Bien-Phu as the cradle of the Laotian people, or at least in attributing to the Laotians and the Thais a common origin, legend seems to be in agreement with reality. There are indeed many points of resemblance and contact between the two peoples. The type is invariably the same, although finer in the native of Luang-
175 Prabang than in the native of Lai-Chau or Dien-Bien-Phu. Not more
291 than two hundred years ago the Laotians still wore, like the black
177 Thais, the Annamite costume and their hair wound in a coil. It was doubtless after contact with the Siamese--who had themselves

175
291
177

[104] taken after the Cambodians in this respect--that they later adopted the "sampot" and formed the habit of cutting their hair very short, just as the Thais of Lai-Chau today dress like their Chinese neighbors and wear their hair in a long pigtail. The same reasons may also explain modifications in language and writing, which must have been identical in the beginning.

563
144

Of the Phou-Thais who are settled today in the territory of Luang-Prabang, some--and these make up the greater number--are black Thais (aborigines) from Dien-Bien-Phu, with a darker coloration than the inhabitants of Lai-Chau, who are called white Thais for this reason. The others belong to this second variety.

The ones who sacked Luang-Prabang in 1887 under the leadership of Deo-Van-Tri were white Thais.

Youns. The Laotians living on the right bank of the Mekong at Xieng-Mai, Xieng-Sen, Muong-Nan, etc. are called Youns.

[304]

The only feature which distinguishes them from their fellows on the left bank is that they generally tattoo their stomachs, whereas the others tattoo the thighs and upper part of the legs, whence the names "Lao-Phoung-Khao" (white-bellied Laotians) and Lao-Phoung-Dam (black-bellied Laotians) which are used in designating the ones and the others.

Phais. Neither do the Phais constitute a separate racial group. They are Khas who are in the process of being transformed, Khas crossed with either Lus or Laotians according as their neighbors have been representatives of the first or the second of these races. Although after this contact they have begun to police themselves and to bring their way of life into conformity with that of the Lus or Laotians, they are nonetheless subject to the same regime as the Khas in respect to taxes and other matters.

563
175

Lus. The Lus, who are natives of the Sip-Song Pan-Nas, did not come and settle in any great numbers in the territory of Luang-Prabang until long after the Laotians, and then only in order to flee the war which was desolating their own land, or simply because they hoped to find better living conditions in this territory. The immigration took place in an entirely peaceful manner, and since that time the Lus have not ceased to live on good terms with the Laotians, whose mores and dress they have generally adopted and by whom they will soon be completely assimilated.

563

Khos, Meos, Yaos. These various names designate natives whose racial type, dress and hairdo ending in a queue unquestionably denote a Chinese origin, and who do not differ from one another except

149: Reinach--452 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

The following table gives the composition of each of these blends:

272

Quality	White points	Delicate green leaves	Large leaves
1st quality	10%	30%	60%
2nd quality	5	15	80
3rd quality	2	5	93

Preparation. After harvesting the leaves are placed on mats in the sun, where they wither and become soft. They are then slightly torrefied in a copper or cast-iron basin placed over a hot fire. This operation, which lasts only a few moments and during which the leaves are constantly stirred and sifted, is designed to remove all the natural moisture which they contain and thus make sure that they will not spoil later on.

Molding and wrapping. Blends are made when the tea is molded, for the tea of these regions is sold in the form of cakes .25 meter in diameter or of cylinders six or seven centimeters in diameter. The different qualities of leaves are placed within easy reach and the different weights of each kind [154] which will be mixed together to make up a cake or cylinder are measured out. Then the mixing itself is done in marble, cast-iron or wooden molds after the leaves have been exposed to steam for a few seconds. The tea is compressed in the molds, the latter are heated, and when they are opened their contents are dry, hard and homogeneous. The cakes or cylinders are then wrapped in bamboo leaves or leaflets and tied with rattan. A package of tea in the form of cakes includes seven of the latter and weighs 1.2 kilograms.

[157]

APPENDIX XXVIII
REPORT AND REGULATIONS ON SLAVERY

567 The problem of slavery for debt is one of the most difficult ones to solve.

177 That of slavery resulting from capture has been solved very easily. The Siamese had already given orders for it to be stopped, and although it still existed in certain provinces, principally in those of Lower Laos, this was due to the fact that the Siamese high mandarins voluntarily closed their eyes, thanks to large sums which were paid to secure their cooperation and which constituted one of their largest sources of income.

As soon as we assumed the administrations of the country the Laotians sounded us out on this subject. They soon realized that our

upbringing and sentiments rejected the idea of such slavery, and without giving in gracefully, for some of them stood to lose large capital investments, they accepted without question the principle of emancipation of slaves by capture. A few attempted to use subterfuge and tried to pass off slaves who were really slaves by capture as slaves for debt. Fortunately every contract among the Laotian people, whatever it be, is a written one, and examination of these contracts was sufficient to foil all their ruses.

At the present time it may be said that this question has been solved. There are no longer any but voluntary slaves who like their life under their masters and, although free, want to stay there. Nearly all of them, moreover, are provided with a certification of liberation which their masters have forced them to request so that they, the masters, will not be accused later of keeping slaves by force.

Full justice must be given to the Laotian authorities who, although the first to suffer from this measure, have freely aided us in our task.

The reports by the government commissioners have noted the good consequences of the measure. One of its first results was to bring a stop to the inter-tribal warfare among the Khas, warfare whose origin, if not its sole purpose, almost always lay in the capture of human cattle demanded by recognized slave traders [158] who were established in the land--they were mainly Burmese--and who had deliveries to make.

As regards slaves for debt, the question is a much more delicate one, for here we are confronted by a voluntary and for the most part uninteresting form of slavery.

In Laos, all crimes and misdemeanors must be paid for. This is the origin of nearly all debts, among the well-to-do as well as among the poorer classes. Among the latter, sentences for stealing buffalo or rice are usually involved, and among the well-to-do sentences for adultery or judicial decisions resulting from unsuccessful speculations. When sentence has been pronounced, money must be found immediately in order to avoid prison. If the borrower can offer security for payment the necessary sum is lent to him at annual interest rates which vary, depending on the province, from ten to twenty percent.

If the borrower is a poor man, he offers his person in payment of the interest and then becomes not the slave, but the servant in a house.

His status is not comparable to that of a slave by capture. Whereas the latter is a veritable beast of burden, often badly mistreated, obliged to work only for his master and to provide himself for his food and clothing, the slave for debts, on the other hand, is fed and

/970/"Laotian Politeness in Ancient and Modern Times (1)"

1. A talk held on June 18, 1949, under the auspices of the Alliance Francaise in Vientiane.

121 An eminent lecturer has said that the Laotian is a humble person. I should like to add that the Laotian is also very polite. If I dared, I would use the past tense! But one should not let oneself be misled by the appearance of the newly arisen cities and the uncertain customs of a generation as yet poorly adjusted, where the old remember the past and where the young believe that much must be destroyed.

That is why the talk that I gave in Laotian on the subject had as much an informative character as an educational one, for I believe that in the era in which we find ourselves it is necessary to help people in making choices and in adjusting themselves. And since we, Frenchmen and Laotians, have been living side by side for more than half a century, we must, in some sort, have an interpretation of French and Laotian customs in order to be able to decide, now in favor of the former, now in favor of the latter.

576 What are the marks of respect?--To show his respect to a superior or to an older person, the Laotian salutes with his hands joined together. This manner of salutation must be preserved. The custom of going on all fours in approaching a mandarin will no longer do. It is, in effect, a humiliating posture. When one passes by a superior it is enough to walk softly while inclining the head a little.

The salute in the Laotian or in the French manner marks the respect of one person toward another. It must be reciprocal, but it is up to the subordinate to salute first.

/971/ When one person salutes another with his hands folded together, the latter must answer in the same manner. If he does not answer at all or only makes a sign with his head he must be considered ill-bred.

177 After having returned the greeting in the Laotian manner,
576 the superior can shake hands in the European manner in order to show his good will towards the person who respects him.

Some say that to salute in the European fashion is too liberal a

177 gesture, and others say that to salute the Laotian way sometimes
576 seems degrading because those whom one greets do not always return the greeting in the same manner, considering it as an homage which is their due but which does not need to be reciprocated.

The Laotian is polite, one must abide by that. The Laotian is respectful of tradition, one must abide by that even more emphatica But let us not forget that from now on all Laotians must have the sense of progress and the desire to improve themselves. Politeness must be neither a unilateral token of respect nor a mark of the humiliation of the human being.

554 To salute in the French manner the subordinate nods his head
576 after having taken off his hat if he is wearing one. If someone extends his hand to him, he shakes it. The superior is the first to hold out his hand. The woman is the first to hold her hand out to a man. To be polite one should shake hands somewhat forcefully. In order to do so one should always use one's right hand and never imitate certain Laotian peasants who, under the pretense of being acquainted with French customs, extend their hand from afar to Europeans while stretching out their left arm.

In the street.--When one meets a high personage in the street it is no longer necessary, as it used to be, to sit down in order to greet him. After having taken off one's hat one nods one's head. If one is not wearing a hat one is free to greet him either by joining one's hands together or by nodding one's head politely. If one is on a bicycle or on a horse, there is no need at all to dismount. The mere gesture of nodding one's head suffices. If one has something to say to a friend whom one meets, one should stand on the side of the street or of the pavement to conduct one's conversation. When one is on a bicycle one should dismount and should not leave one leg over the frame of the bicycle while one is chatting. If one is dealing with a colleague or an intimate friend, one may hail him using expressions like: "Sabay!" (good day), or "Pai sai ma?" (where are you coming from?): that is good tradition, which must always be preserved.

481 Laotians have the habit of walking in Indian file. This habit
576 should be abandoned because it is no longer good form. It will be well to practice the European custom of walking abreast of one another except in cases when this is a hindrance or on a path. When there are two people walking together, /972/ the superior places

daughter, Princess Nang Yot Keo. At an indeterminate date which must come between 1340 and 1350, he was given the command of an army destined to reconquer the kingdom of his fathers. According to the Laotian chronicle, the victorious advance of this army enabled Fa Ngoum to declare himself king of Lan Xan. He immediately demanded the submission of all the Thai princes of Mekong. The center of resistance to Fa Ngoum was Phai Nam (spiny bamboos) because of the impenetrable vegetable belt which protected it like veritable ramparts. Fa Ngoum seized it by means of the classical trick of ornamenting missiles with gold and silver, then pretending to retreat and then pouncing on the enemy at the moment when they had scattered to gather the precious metal. In memory of this episode, the town was baptized Vieng Kham which means "circled with gold" and which later became Vientiane, "circled with sandalwood." Fa Ngoum organized his kingdom with force and reigned as a despot. Complaints were made and the king of Cambodia advised him to be moderate. Fa Ngoum then requested that a mission be sent him from Cambodia consisting of religious and lettered men, and of artisans. This mission introduced the orthodox books of Buddhism and a statue of the Buddha (Prabang) which had been presented in the eleventh century to the Khmer sovereign by the king of Ceylon. Prabang thus became the safeguard of the kingdom.

Up until recent years this tradition led one to believe that the introduction of Buddhism into Laos dated from Fa Ngoum. The discovery of a certain number of Buddhist sculptures of Khmer manufacture of the twelfth century A. D., has destroyed this theory (see below: Introduction of Buddhism to Laos).

After a series of wars, Fa Ngoum died in 1373 at the age of fifty-eight. His successor Sam Sen Thai reigned from 1373 to 1416. He kept [16] peace in his kingdom and passed on to his successor a prosperous kingdom, well established and living in peace, and at the same time dreaded by its neighbors.

The fifteenth century saw a succession of sovereigns about whom history has nothing in particular to tell. Let us mention, however, a war with the emperor of Annam. The first part of the sixteenth century passes under the reign of King Phothisarath (1506-1547), a pious Buddhist. One of his most famous actions is the edict against the cult of Phis. Setthathirath came into power in 1548 after a war with the Burmese. His death was followed by a troubled period. The beginning of the seventeenth century is particularly obscure, but in 1637 a great king called Souligna Vongsa (1637-1694) ascended

779

forms of Buddhism: the Mahayana or Great Vehicle, and the Hinayana or Little Vehicle. "One must beware of contrasting too violently the two Vehicles, as is often done. They were held together by many and subtle bonds." However in our days a Laotian Hinayanist and a Mongol Mahayanist have nothing in common.

Roughly, the essential difference between the two doctrines is that Hinayana considers the Buddha not as a superior man but as a man, while Mahayana deified Sakyamuni, who, without being a god, was as much as or more than a deity. Activity, formerly condemned, is glorified, sanctified on condition that it is freed from personal interests and is used for the salvation of others. Individual salvation has absolute value only if it contributes to universal salvation. The nirvana of the Hinayanist must be denounced as a scandalous exaltation of self. Bodhi, the supreme knowledge which makes Buddhas, is accessible to all beings. The saint is the Bodhisattva, who is on the point of reaching nirvana, yet remains during periods of incalculable successive existences to save [22] souls. The Mahayanist universe, which has grown immeasurably is filled with an infinite multitude of Buddhas. Many Bodhisattva exist: the principal ones are Avalokitesvara, Maitreya, Manjousri, Vajrapani, etc. Besides, each Buddha and each Bodhisattva has been doubled by a dhyani-Buddha, a contemplative Buddha (spiritual Buddha). To the belief in nirvana proclaimed by the Hinayana, the Mahayanists add an infinite series of paradises, the "pure Grounds" (this notion is Iranian) where souls saved by the grace of the Bodhisattva are born again in the symbolical lotus.

Mahayana now flourishes in central Asia, in Tibet, China, Japan and in Vietnam, was in vogue in Java, and in the ancient Khmer empire from the ninth to the thirteenth century. Its influence is found in certain sculptures of Luang Prabang (see appendix). Hinayana is practised at the present time in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia and Laos. [101]

Introduction of Buddhism to Laos.

175
177
779

According to certain documents, Buddhism was introduced to Laos by Buddhaghosa. This legend is too popular in other Buddhist countries of the Indochinese peninsula for it to be given any credit here. Laotian tradition tells us that Fa Ngoum had a mission come from Cambodia which brought not only the sacred books of orthodox Buddhism but also Brahmanic texts whose traces can still be found today. This tradition, which offers greater proofs than the legend, fixed the date of the introduction of Buddhism to Luang Prabang in

175
177
179
the fourteenth century. Archaeological discoveries made in recent years in the region of Luang Prabang and more recent ones in the neighborhood of Vientiane may enable this important event in the religious history of Laos to be moved back more than two centuries.

[23] The Pagoda.

346
778
[792]
"Laotians liked to place their pagodas on high points, but their marked taste for the edge of the water made them prefer the neighborhood of rivers. This location of pagodas is a natural consequence of the relations between bonzes and inhabitants. The former drew their livelihood from the latter, and these are crowded on the river banks."

346
In principle the pagoda consists of three elements:

1) The buildings connected directly with the cult: vat, chapels, libraries; that, standing landmarks and niches;

2) The surrounding enclosures, exterior and interior;

3) The buildings for the immediate use of the inhabitants of the pagoda: monastery [bonzerie], cells for the bonzes, reception halls.

The vat consists of a large hall furnished with a pedestal on which stands the statue of the Buddha often accompanied by a preaching pulpit. The columns and walls are frequently ornamented with paintings.

Among the annexes of the vat, the most numerous are the chapels which are in the form either of delicate buildings or small compound halls.

The that is a votive and sometimes a funereal monument. (See appendix on Vientiane).

The only piece of furniture always found in the vat is the preaching pulpit, an elegant construction, often made of gilded wood. By way of furniture there are a few seats for the chiefs of the bonzes,
[788]
particularly for the torch bearer. Finally, particularly in the region of Luang Prabang, one finds the hang-lin, a curious spout-shaped object, with elegant decoration, which is used for sprinkling the Buddhas on great feast days (cf. the New Year). These various finely carved objects are usually made of gilded wood and are sometimes inlaid with enamelled lead [24] whose brilliant gleam makes them sparkle. The manuscript chests are usually collected in the
[247]
libraries, piled up in the shape of an inverted pyramid; they are generally carved and gilded.

inverting the order of words. The negation bo is added. Is the gentleman home? is translated Tan you ban bo? Sometimes a single word contains a whole phrase:

mi = there are.
dai = it is possible.

Vocabulary. In addition to the pronunciation of sounds, one of the difficulties of the Laotian language is the distinction between noble language and popular language. The language is different when one addresses the bonzes, the high dignitaries, the king. There is a very rich concrete and abstract Laotian vocabulary which unfortunately is tending to go out of use. We have found in manuscripts Laotian words translating textually [78] abstract Pali words, but they have been gradually forgotten. The Laotians no longer read enough of their original texts. Cheap Siamese literature has invaded the country making the people abandon their own language.

One of the urgent tasks is to bring back the old Laotian texts into honor and to spread them abroad again among the public.

[79]

LITERATURE AND MUSIC

In addition to the canonical religious literature already discussed, Laos possesses an important literary treasury. But as in Cambodia, Siam and Burma, this literature is anonymous. We are in the presence of epic texts of Indian origin, of legendary traditions, of apologues, of legal, moral or comic tales. There exist also novels, but as in French "romances" of the Middle Ages, they are by unknown authors. There is no equivalent in Laos of a Kalidasa or of a Li T'ai-po. No philosopher or dramatic author is known.

If the name of a French writer were mentioned whose manner is closest to that of Laotian authors, it would be that of Charles Perrault, and this in a word characterizes the type of Laotian literature. It excels in wonderful tales.

Literature of Indian Inspiration.

In addition to the Jatakas, Laos possesses at least two great texts of Indian origin. This is said under reservation of further discoveries, for in spite of the important work of Louis Finot, "Recherches sur la littérature laotienne," we are still far from knowing all the treasures of the Laos pagodas.

a) The Pancatantra. The first text is a collection of tales copied from the famous Indian Pancatantra. In the Middle Ages